ANDROID™ NETRUNNER™
THE CARD GAME

Up and Over

The room contained a table that Nasir had chosen as his workspace, a cot, and an air purifier that seemingly emitted more heat than air. He took a second to wipe some sweat from his eyes, and took a swig of water from a canteen Rachel had given him. It tasted funny.

"Easy now," said Rachel from across the small room. She was lounging on the cot in a tank-top and cotton shorts, her spacesuit sprawled on the floor between them. "You've been working non-stop." It had been almost 12 hours since they had left the station. Nasir had spent most of that time hacking from his rig. Edna required too much power, so he had brought his smaller, more efficient console that was tailored for mapping the Terra Incognita. It sat on the table, a collection of interwoven disks that spun and rotated like celestial bodies. He had asked Rachel questions, but she had not said much, other than that she was a "freelancer" who had been hired by an anonymous party to protect him. Even from the authorities. There was an APB out for his arrest the moment he had landed in Kaguya. Someone had taken an interest in him. He didn't like it, but without her aid he would probably have found himself in another interrogation room. About the only information he found useful was that they were in the Docklands.

Rachel jumped up and sauntered over to the screen. "Are you able to locate the source?" she asked, leaning over the display, her arm brushing his shoulder. Her proximity made it more difficult for him to focus. She had asked some questions of her own from the cot, her big green eyes seemingly boring into his skull, searching for his secrets. His explanations hadn't seemed to make much sense, until he talked about the fragments of code he had been searching for his entire life.

"Hold on." The readouts were coming fast and furious.

Rachel waited patiently as Nasir tapped at the display. There were rows of code scrolling from right to left across the screen, and a holographic projection of the moon that was spinning at a dizzying rate.

"The signal is coming from here." The moon stopped spinning, and a blinking red light appeared.

"The Nubium. What's there?" asked Rachel.

"Well, that's the interesting part. There is nothing there. At least, not officially."

"What does that mean?"

Nasir leaned back in his chair, careful not to make any more contact with Rachel. "The network I'm accessing is the oldest one on the moon. It was initially built to monitor temperature and oxygen levels. If all else fails, it should stay online. According to this datastream, there are a series of pipes and cables that run underground, all the way from Heinlein and the Blue Sun plant. And they're still active. But they converge here. In the Nubium. In this void, the spot where the source code is emanating from."

"An underground complex," Rachel mused, straightening up and crossing her arms. "The U.S. built several military installations on the moon when it was first colonized. Most of them were shut down before the war."

Nasir did not like the sound of that. "The source would have unfathomable military application. But if it was…how could something so powerful be lost?"

"Maybe it was buried. Locked away." Rachel sounded concerned.

Nasir shrugged. "I am not picking up any heat signatures or signs of life, but whatever is there is drawing power. A lot of power." He brought up a new display, with several modulating bars on it.

"What's that?" asked Rachel.

"It's the wave field being generated by the source. It has gotten stronger since I first encountered it."

"What's a wave field?" Rachel shifted uncomfortably. Nasir guessed that she wasn't usually in over her head.

"People like me, we interface with the network directly with our brains, either through a cybernetic implant or a brain-net." Rachel arched an eyebrow. "So, a wave field is a dense area of brain waves, digitally-rendered. You go in, you expose your brain to the field, which could be bad–or even fatal. Much better to bypass it, to go in and get direct access."

"Direct access." Rachel smiled. "Now you're speaking my language. That shouldn't be a problem."

"I also need older technology to interface with the ports that we'll find within the complex, if it's really there."

"I know just the place. Time to suit back up, cowboy."

The Docklands were the lifeblood of illicit dealings on the moon. Set inside the rim of a large crater, the middle of the Docklands were where large shipments from Earth and Mars were unloaded. But most of it was in the dead zone, atmosphere free. Within the sides of the crater caves had been dug out or taken over, for both habitation and business. If there was one place to find anything you wanted in Heinlein, it was here.

"Stay close," said Rachel through the suit's comm as they exited the safe house. They were almost at the crest of the crater, and there was little in the way of safety walls. Nasir hugged the rock-face. He had never been

scared of heights, but the lower gravity combined with the uneven footing made him nervous. Most of the Docklands was not pressurized, and he had a feeling they wouldn't be finding themselves in the nicer parts.

They descended slowly, the path they were on spiraling down around the sides of the crater. Sometimes there were ladders. Nasir lost count of how many rungs he climbed down. The lower they went, the more people there were. But all of them were likewise helmeted, and no one seemed interested in interfering with anyone else's business.

"This is it." There was a neon sign pounded into the lunar rock. "Aesop's Pawnshop. Buy. Sell. Scrip only."

The hatch swung open with no resistance. After it closed behind them there was a hiss and pressurized air was pumped into the chamber. There were displays along the walls, highlighting various specials. A green light flashed once on the hatch in front of them; Rachel lowered her hood and Nasir did the same. She pushed open the door, and they entered the shop.

It was poorly lit. The walls were lined with shelves; power adapters, drives, chips, stoves, drills, pots, and all manner of tools and knickknacks. In the middle of the room were racks of spacesuits and other clothes. To their right was a long counter, and behind the counter was a long-haired man with a bionic arm. There were a variety of guns hanging on the wall behind him, each one looking more dangerous than the one below it.

"That's Aesop," whispered Rachel to Nasir. He let her lead the way to the counter.

Aesop gave Nasir a long stare as they approached. "You look familiar."

Nasir glanced at Rachel. She was relaxed, but her arm was dangerously close to the flechette pistol he had noticed she kept in her jacket.

"But," continued Aesop, "Provided you can pay enough scrip…"

Rachel gave him a frosty glare. "That won't be an issue. Show him what you need, Nasir."

Nasir popped out his PAD, and pulled up a list of parts. He handed it to Aesop. Aesop grabbed it with his bionic arm. "Better than a real one," he said, motioning to a group of arms in the case beneath him. "I can hook you up with one too, if you'd like." He gave a nasty grin, and started reading the list.

"Tevron jacks. Monkey cords. This appears to be a list of junk."

"Not junk," said Nasir. "Just old. These were standard about a century ago."

Aesop scratched at his five o'clock shadow. "I got a right ancient console someone brought in a week ago. Might have some of this stuff with it. But keep in mind, you better be able to pay, junk or no."

When he returned with console, Nasir knew right away they had hit the jackpot.

"That'll do," he said.

— **To be continued in the *All That Remains* Data Pack…**

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